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FALLEN FORTUNES.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF 'LOST SIR MASSINGBERD,' 'WALTER'S WORD,' &c.

CHAPTER I.—AFTER THE CHARADES.

It is night, and the moon is rising over crag and coppice in its fullness, making all things, as is commonly said, 'as light as day.' Its silent, silvery splendours do not, however, vie with the golden glories of noonday, but have a radiance of their own, infinitely more enchanting as it gleams on wood and wave. Never does Nathay look so charming as when its smooth, swift stream mirrors the moonbeams, or steals coily from them in eddy and pool beneath its bush-fringed banks. Never do the tall crags of Bleabarrow stand so grandly out as beneath this harvest moon. How distinctly does every giant boulder assert itself, every heather-clad knoll, and every mountain ash that leans aslant out of its rocky cleft, like a flag at a ship's stern in calm! To one who observes her closely, Nature has at this time a listening air; the giant boulders, in their statuesque magnificence, seem to be awaiting something, the utterance, it may be, of some magic charm that shall confer a wondrous transformation; the ash is leaning and listening; even the tufts of heather stand stiffly up, as though in expectation. If he be alone in such a scene, Man himself mechanically listens also; and to some a voice is vouchsafed—uncertain, vague, yet pregnant, so it seems, with eternal mysteries; and by others there is no sound heard, save the whisper of the wind among the trees, or the murmur of the stream as it hurries to the fall.

'Listen, Kitty, listen! Is it not pleasant to hear the Nathay tumbling over the weir in a night like this?'

The speaker is a plump, fair girl in a housemaid's dress, who is standing at an open window of a mansion commanding a view of the weir, and she addresses one of her own age and sex who is leaning over the window-sill beside her.

To judge from the attire of the latter, which is a neat and cheap one, such as is bought for solid merit, as respects its washing qualities, rather than for pattern and texture, and by the little apology for a cap, made out of imitation lace, that crowns her rich brown hair, you would conclude her to be of the same station as her companion; but Kate has an air of refinement that the other lacks. They are both, however, what even bachelors, who have arrived at the critical age, would term pretty girls; and if Mary (for that is the speaker's name) is inclined to be stout, that is no defect, so far as my poor judgment goes, in a pretty housemaid, but generally bespeaks content and good-nature. She is evidently one of those who do not 'work their fingers to the bone' in the performance of household duties, for her hands are smooth and delicate, while it is equally plain that her occupation lies within doors, for her complexion is as soft as cream, and almost as white. Her neck, too, though marred by the presence on either side of it of a large blob of mosaic gold in the shape of an ear-ring, is free from roughness or sunburn; and its delicacy contrasts prettily enough with the gay cotton handkerchief pinned above her bosom, in that old-world modest fashion which is rarely seen in these days, even when modesty is affected, as upon the stage. Upon the whole, we would say that Mary is a superior young person in her rank of life, and that her mistress is an easy one, and leaves her plenty of leisure to adorn and preserve her charms; and woe be to the susceptible gamekeeper (one would go on to prophesy) who, in his watchful rounds to-night, should behold that pleasant vision as she gazes out on Nathay's stream and crags. Kate, like Mary, is a blonde; but the resemblance between the girls goes no

further. She is a year or two younger than her companion—indeed, unusually young for one in domestic service—and has an air of delicacy so pronounced, that it only just falls short of the appearance of ill-health. Her cheek-bones might be termed too high, and her frame too angular, if it were not that Nature has not yet done with her. Her beauty is at present in the budding stage, though it gives promise of great perfection; and her eyes are too soft and spiritual, one would say, for the task of looking for cobwebs or cleaning grates. If she is to be up betimes to-morrow, and go about her work as usual, it strikes one that they ought long ago to have been closed in sleep, instead of looking on rock and river with such a thoughtful and impassioned gaze.

'You hear the weir, don't you, Kitty,' continued Mary; 'though it seems you don't hear me?'

'A thousand pardons, Polly. O yes, I hear it well enough, and I heard your question too; but, somehow, on a night like this, one likes to think, and not to talk. It was very selfish of me not to answer you; but I was wondering how long yon river had run on like this, how many generations of men and women had listened to it, and how many more will do so, when you and I shall have no ears for its ceaseless song.'

'No ears, dear Kitty; what a funny notion! Oh, I see; you mean when we shall both be dead.'

'Yes; dead and gone, Mary. The moon will shine as calmly as it does now, yonder, glistening on those crags we know so well; the sky will be just as blue and beautiful; the trees will be even grander and larger; but we shall never see them more.'

'Well, of course not; we shall be enjoying something better in heaven—at least I hope so.'

'Do you really hope so, Polly?' asked the other earnestly; 'or is it only that you hope you are not going elsewhere? I cannot help thinking that we often pretend we want to go to heaven, when we have in reality no expectation of the sort.'

'O Kitty, how can you be so wicked?'

'But is it not wicked to pretend such things? It seems to me to be attempting to deceive not only ourselves, but Him who made us. Now, on a night like this, and looking on so fair a scene, I almost feel as if I *was* in heaven; as though, at all events, I was not of the earth—earthly—but was projected somehow—I don't know how—into some diviner sphere. There seem influences about us such as are not perceived at other times, if they then exist; a sort of communion appears to be established between our souls and Nature herself'—

'You are "projecting" me, dear Kitty,' interrupted the other, laughing, 'very much beyond my depth: for my part, I am quite content to leave speculation alone, or, where there seems a hitch, to trust to the clergyman.'

'That is, because you are conscious of being so comfortably located, that the very idea of change, even in one's ideas, annoys you. From your cradle to your grave, you will, in all human probability, be out of the reach of adversity; and therefore this world seems sufficient for all your wants, if not the best of all possible worlds.'

'For that matter, you will be just as well off as I, Kitty.'

'So far as material wants are concerned, I suppose I shall; but I cannot shut my eyes to the

position of those who are less favoured by fortune. I often wonder if one were poor, and looked down upon (as, I fear, poor people are, whatever we may say), and conscious of injustice and contempt, whether one's views of the future would not be altered as much as one's views of the present. It seems to me that it is much easier for the rich to be what is called orthodox—to pronounce whatever is to be right, and to take matters as they find them mapped out for them, both here and hereafter—than for the poor.'

'Yet I am sure some of our poor people here—I mean of those that belong to the estate'—

'A very different thing from the estate belonging to *them*, Polly,' interrupted her companion drily.

'Of course it is. Providence has placed them in a subordinate position; but yet they are often better people—I have heard the rector say so—and more religious-minded, than their masters. They are ill-lodged and ill-fed, rheumatic, and I know not what else; but yet they never complain, nor seem to think it hard though they see others so much better off.'

'Still, I confess I should feel it bitterly, Polly, if I were in their place,' answered the other earnestly. 'I am afraid I should be a radical and an infidel, and all that is bad.'

'Well, then, I am very glad that you are not likely to be exposed to the temptation, cousin,' was the laughing reply. 'If your papa gets into parliament, he is quite clever enough to become a cabinet minister, and then you will be a great lady; when you will soon get rid of these socialistic sort of ideas, and begin to patronise us all.'

'Patronise!' exclaimed Kate; 'that is another thing that seems to me to embitter the position of the poor almost beyond endurance. There are people in our class even who seem to imagine that they have bought their fellow-creatures out and out—body and soul—with a few yards of flannel, or, very literally, a few "messes of portage." Even if they had settled a comfortable annuity upon their unhappy victims, they could not have the right to treat them as they do; but to have bought them so cheap, and then to give themselves such airs of proprietorship, is to my mind a very offensive spectacle.'

'My dear Kitty,' cried the other, laughing, 'if you are not of a more "umble" spirit, and do not feel more grateful for your perquisites than your language seems to promise, you will never get an "upper" situation. Even as it is, you know, it was noticed by Mr Holt in the charade to-night that you looked above your place.'

'I daresay I should be very unfitted for it,' was the grave rejoinder, 'as well as for anything else that was really useful. I often wonder'—

'What is the good of it? You are always wondering, Kitty,' broke in the other girl.

'I can't help it; and I have heard it said that wonder is a stepping-stone to understanding. I say I often wonder, if papa and mamma were to be ruined, what use I could possibly be to them. How could I get my own bread, even, except by the very occupation we have been playing at to-night—that of domestic service. As to going out as a governess, for example, what qualifications do I possess for such a post?'

'Oh, that is no obstacle, my dear Kitty, for I

have had half-a-dozen governesses, and not one of them knew what she proposed to teach.'

'Well, I told you I thought it wicked to "pretend," and so I do; so that the profession of teaching would be out of the question, so far as I am concerned. What on earth, then, should I do, if I were penniless?'

'I will tell you. You would send an unpaid letter to Miss Mary Campden, Riverside, Bleabarrow, Derbyshire, telling her how matters stood; and as soon as steam and wheels could take her, she would be with you; and this would be her answer: "Come to Riverside, Kitty, and for the rest of your life make it your home. We have always been sisters at heart, though only cousins by birth; let me now prove how much I love you."'

As Polly said these words, her pretty face was lit up with the brightest of smiles, and her voice had quite a touch of generous welcome.

'My dearest Polly, how good you are!' said Kitty.

'And you *would* come to me, would you not, and make this your home for life?'

'Well, you see, there would be papa and mamma, and poor Jenny and Tony. I could never leave them, and live in luxury, while they were poor.'

'But we should never let them be poor, of course; I mean my papa and mamma would not permit it. Even if you were not—all of you—the dearest friends we have in the world, blood is thicker than water, and has indisputable claims.'

'Then how is it that neither your people nor mine ever take any notice of Uncle Philip?'

'O Kitty, you must not speak of him; indeed, you must not. He is not your uncle at all, you know, legally. He is a person whose name should never be mentioned; at least by you and me, and young girls like you and me. We ought not even to be aware of his existence.'

'But since we are aware?'

'Well, then, we should ignore it. It is your duty, even more than mine; for if the law had decided otherwise than it did, your papa would have been disinherited, and this man Astor would have succeeded to your grandfather's property.'

'But this man Astor, as you call him, is my uncle, nevertheless,' persisted Kitty; 'and it was not his fault that his mother was not my grandmother.'

'What a funny child you are! Of course, it was not; but a great many people in the world are victims to misfortune. It is the will of Providence. Why, it's in the Bible itself, Kitty, that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on their children.'

'I know it is; but it seems very hard, for all that.'

'But that is very wicked, Kitty.'

'What! to pity Uncle Philip? Then I hope I shall be always wicked.'

Here there was a little pause. Mary knew by experience that it was idle to argue with her cousin upon general principles, and at once descended to particulars.

'I have heard that Mr Astor is a bad man; dissipated and untrustworthy; a sort of person quite certain to go to the dogs.'

'Who told you that?'

'One who knows him better than anybody,

because he has more to do with him; one, too, who is a great friend of your father's, and a warm admirer of yourself, so that you should receive his opinion with respect on all accounts.'

'I would not believe everything Mr Holt says, if you mean him,' observed Kitty quietly; 'and even if he be right in this case, Uncle Philip is still to be pitied. I saw him once by accident when I was quite a child; so like in face, and even in voice and manner, to his brother, dear papa, and yet so different in their positions in life.'

'They are different every way, Kitty, if you only knew them better,' answered Mary gravely. 'Mr Astor is a *mauvais sujet*. Mr Holt tells me he is about to leave England for good and all, to try his fortune in the New World; and from what he said, I am confident that that will be a happy thing for all parties.'

'That is what people always say when they have contrived to shake some responsibility off their shoulders,' said Kitty.

'Nay, Mr Philip Astor is certainly no responsibility of ours, at all events,' observed Mary quickly.

'I was not thinking of Uncle Philip just then, Polly.'

'Ah, you were thinking of Geoffrey. Well, of course I regret that mamma should have expressed herself in those terms to-night about him; but it cannot be expected that the lad should live at Riverside all his life; and since he has a fancy for the sea, why should he not indulge it?'

'But he has no such fancy; it is only that he feels himself a burden—or rather, he is made to feel it'—

'I don't see that, Kitty; indeed, I don't,' interrupted the other sharply.

'Then you must be stone-blind.'

'O no; it is merely that I look at him with ordinary eyes, and don't make a fool of the boy, by pretending to be in love with him.'

'No; you conceal your affection for him very well, it must be confessed.'

'I wish I could return the compliment, Kate. You make yourself quite conspicuous by your attentions to that young lad. It is a very mistaken kindness in you—to say the least of it. If you mean nothing by it, it is an act of cruelty to him; and if you do mean anything, Geoffrey Derwent has scarcely a shilling he can call his own, and is not the sort of character to make a fortune, so that he will never be in a position to marry.'

'I think this discussion is uncalled for, cousin,' answered Kitty, drawing up her slight figure to its full height.

'You provoked it yourself, Kate, by reflecting upon mamma's conduct to Geoffrey; and while we are upon the subject, I would recommend that when your father comes to-morrow, you should be a little more discreet in your behaviour, for he has quicker eyes than your mamma, who has not such a knowledge of the world'—

'My mamma knows all that she needs to know, though she knows nothing bad,' interrupted Kate, in indignant tones; 'she is not only the best, but the wisest of God's creatures in all that He deems to be wisdom; and I would rather have her good opinion than that of all the world beside.'

'My dear Kitty, I never uttered one word against her (nor have ever dreamed of doing so),

so you need not be so fiery in your championship; whereas, you did reflect upon the conduct of my mother as respected Geoffrey; she is not so fond of him as you are, but she has done her duty by him—and more than her duty—for the last ten years.

'Till at last she is getting a little tired of it,' observed Kate coldly.

'You have no right to say that, cousin; Geoffrey has been brought up like one of the family—just as though he had been my own brother; and yet he has no natural claim upon us'—

'For shame, Mary!' interrupted the other indignantly. 'How can you talk like that? Do you suppose I don't know how it all came about? How old Mr Derwent was your father's dearest friend, and put him on the road to fortune, though he lost all himself. No natural claim? Is gratitude, then, contrary to nature?'—

'What! do you call my father ungrateful, you, who know that Geoffrey has been educated entirely at his expense?'—

'Heaven forbid! He is the most kind and generous of men; but I honestly tell you that I think he has done no more than his duty in paying for Geoffrey's schooling. Why, I have heard him say myself—and I honour him for it—that he owes all he has in the world to old Mr Derwent; and what is Geoffrey's schooling out of your papa's ten thousand a year? Why, not so much as he pays to his second gardener! I think it unworthy of you, Mary, to adduce such a thing as evidence that the poor boy has nothing to complain of in the teeth of the scene we witnessed to-day; I do, indeed.'

'I think that mamma was a little hard upon Geoffrey, Kate,' answered Mary slowly; 'but not so hard as to evoke such indignation on your part. Of course if—at seventeen—the young gentleman is your accepted lover, you have every right to be in a passion; but otherwise, you had better have been silent—at least to my mother's daughter.'

'I am not in a passion even now, Mary; though what you have just said was designed to put me into one. If I know myself, I should have been just as angry to have seen any other person in a dependent position so contemptuously treated as Geoffrey was; but if I have said anything disrespectful of your mamma to you—though I am not aware of it—I am very sorry for it. It was altogether wrong of me, and would have been so, had I so spoken of her to anybody—far more to you. Mrs Campden has been always most kind to me, I'm sure; and a kinder hostess to us all it is impossible to picture.'

'Of course she is, because she loves you all; not that she does not love Jeff too; only, she has such a notion of discipline, and of boys making their own way in the world. I think the only exception is your Tony, whom she certainly does spoil; but nobody can help spoiling Tony. How you will miss him, when he goes to Eton in October!'

'Yes, indeed; and how dear mamma will miss him, and above all, poor Jenny! Something to love and cling to, and pet, seems absolutely necessary to her existence. She is herself so dependent on others, that to have some one about her dependent upon her, is an especial delight. Papa says she has taught Tony far better than his masters have done, and that he has got into the

upper school at his entrance examination—he is but nine, you know—has been more owing to her than to them.'

'What a clever family you all are, Kate,' observed Mary admiringly; 'I am quite surprised that everybody is not afraid of you, instead of you being such favourites. I suppose it comes from your having such a clever papa. I sometimes think, that if I could wish my own papa to change in anything—which I don't—I should like him to talk, and laugh, and make everybody admire him, as yours does. Is he always in as high spirits at home as he is everywhere else? I need not ask if he is as good-humoured. I cannot imagine Mr Dalton put out by anything.'

'Well, I don't say papa is never put out,' said Kate, laughing for the first time, as though the topic of talk had begotten merriment; 'but he is so soon all right again, that we rarely notice that there has been any interval of gloom. We have not seen so much of him at home of late, as usual, and we miss him sadly. I am sure, so far as mamma and we are concerned, we would much rather that he was not made a member of parliament, for that will take him more away from us than ever.'

'Oh, but then think of the position, Kate, and the great things which, in his case, it may lead to.'

'I am afraid I am not ambitious, Polly,' sighed Kate; 'and from what I have seen of ambition in papa's case—that is, since he began to sit on "Boards"—which, however profitable, must be very uncomfortable—and to take the chair at this meeting and that, and to busy himself in public affairs, I think it would have been better for him to have remained as he was.'

'But the law was not to his taste, Kate; and though it is true he had a competency of his own, it seemed like hiding his candle under a bushel to remain a briefless barrister all his days. If I were you, I should be so proud of him.'

'You cannot be more proud of him than I am, Polly, or so proud as dear mamma is; but for the reasons I have mentioned, I regret, and so does she, I know, though she would never confess it, that he is standing for Bampton. Since he wishes it, we prefer, of course, that he will succeed; but so far as we are selfishly concerned, if he fails to do so, it will be no disappointment.'

'Oh, but he will not fail; he is far too clever, and has laid his plans too wisely for that; and though it will cost him a good deal of money, it is most important to his interests—so Mr Holt assures me—to secure the seat.'

'Mr Holt seems to have told you a good deal; I wish he would mind his own business. It is he who persuades papa to "go into" this and that, as he calls it, and tells him of "good things," which I fancy don't always turn out as good as they look. Mamma dislikes the man, I know, and distrusts him.'

'But then dear Mrs Dalton is not a woman of business.'

'I don't know about business, Mary: mamma is the best manager of a household I ever knew, which is woman's business, I suppose; and as to people, though she does not talk much, and never says an uncharitable word, her instincts are always right; and in this case my own agree with them. I don't admire this Mr Holt at all, and am very sorry your good father asked him down to

Riverside, at least while we were staying with you. I am not proud myself, you know, and care very little what occupation people follow, so long as they themselves are nice; but I am surprised that Mr Campden should have so "cottoned," as Jeff calls it, to a man like that, who is also, I believe, a stock-broker.'

Not a word was spoken for some moments; nothing was heard but the murmur of the weir, and the melancholy tuwhit tuwhoo of the owls, as they called to one another across the unseen mere above, from which it flowed; then once more Mary broke silence with: 'What is a stock-broker, Kitty, dear?'

If she had asked, What is a stock-dove? the inquiry would have been pertinent enough to such a scene; but as it was, the question was so ridiculously inappropriate, that Kitty broke into a silvery laugh, that woke the echoes; it also awoke some one else, for a window was thrown up, immediately beneath that which the two friends occupied, and a thin but decisive voice cried: 'Mary, your father says that there must be no more charades, if they lead to all this discussion afterwards between you girls; I must insist upon your going to bed.'

'Indeed, Mrs Campden, I am afraid it was my fault, not Mary's,' answered Kate penitently from above.

'No, no; I know it is not you, Kitty. Mary would sit up all night, and perhaps be no worse for it; but you are much too delicate for such imprudences.'

'I'll have both those young hussies discharged in the morning,' broke in the bass notes of the exasperated Mr Campden; 'their tittle-tattle robs me of my beauty sleep.'

'What a nice dear old thing, your papa is!' laughed Kate, as she and Mary softly closed their window, and prepared to divest themselves of their borrowed plumes. 'If I was a housemaid, and he in the same service, I should certainly set my cap at him.'

SOME RECENT OBSERVATIONS ON ANTS.

A CONTRIBUTION to the character and habits of ants has lately been made by a Swiss naturalist, M. Forel. This inquirer establishes the fact, that ants of different varieties make war on each other, the stronger and red kind, known as *Formica sanguinea*, overcoming the meadow ants, *Formica pratensis*, and usually reducing them to slavery. The reckless fury with which the red ants attack their unfortunate neighbours is described as something dreadful. M. Forel speaks of it as a sort of 'drunkenness of fight.' Some of the ants around try to stop these delirious combatants by seizing them with their feet, and holding them till they sober down.

On one occasion the author placed a number of workers and cocoons of the meadow ant near a residence of red ants; the latter soon carried off the cocoons. Was it to eat the pupæ? By no means. Next year presented the curious spectacle of both kinds of ants living together in fraternal association. A breach having been made in the nest, both kinds carried the cocoons down below, and sought to repair the disaster with equal zeal. Next, a large number of meadow ants were brought near the habitation, from another district; but those

in the nest, far from welcoming them as congeners, fell upon them in concert with the red ants. The new-comers had the advantage in numbers, and besieged the nest. The allies, conscious of their extremity, took to flight, carrying away slaves, larvæ and pupæ, and new-born workers; and established themselves at a respectful distance. An alliance has sometimes been effected between the inimical species, which has continued many years. Very curious is the mixed ant-hill. Each species retains its own way of building, so that the architecture is mixed. On the dome may usually be seen the meadow ants bearing material, or sunning themselves. If you disturb them, or introduce some unknown animals, they quickly disappear into the nest. They are seeking assistance. Presently appears a host of the red ants, and if a fight occurs, the meadow ants do not join in it with the others.

The newly hatched workers take to domestic work, and do not know friends from enemies for some time. It seemed possible, therefore, to form alliances among several different species, if the subjects brought together were quite young. This proved successful. In a glass case were deposited pupæ belonging to six different species, under the care of three young workers having no common parentage. The establishment developed and increased quite tranquilly, the different species all living in concord. In the free state, such associations are impossible; the only unions realised are between the red and meadow ants.

The relations between ants of the same species, but of different colonies, have been matter of doubt. The truth is, it depends on certain circumstances whether they shall be friendly or hostile. When the parties are established tolerably separate from each other, under satisfactory conditions, they fight each other 'to the bitter end.' If two neighbouring ant-hills be cramped for space, there will be battle and repeated engagements; but in general, the forces coming to be exhausted, an alliance will at length be formed. If two ant-hills have but a small population, the parties will improve their circumstances by an immediate alliance.

When an ant-hill is overcharged with inhabitants, emigrations take place more or less numerous. At the border of a kitchen-garden, a colony of ants had been long established. The paths they took were various; that most frequented lay across the road, passed into a field, and along the side of a pond to a clump of trees; it was very long. In spring, a party of ants went to form a colony among the trees. Later, a fresh party set out from the old home, and became domiciled at the end of another path. The place proved unsuitable; they left it, and settled on a grass plot a little way off. During the whole summer, the workers of the new establishments often met the workers who still remained in the mother-hill, and the reception on both sides was evidently cordial. Autumn came, and the meetings were interrupted. The following year, the inhabitants of each nest got into the habit of not moving far from it; and the old relations were thus broken off. After a considerable time had elapsed, the idea occurred to take some individuals of the old nest and place them near one of the young colonies. Received with anything but cordiality, they were glad to make their escape. In a second experiment of the same kind, the

new-comers, though less harshly treated, were yet received with distrust. It has often been observed that ants separated for a certain time again recognise one another; but if the separation has been very long, they lose all recollection of their companions. It must be considered, however, that the population soon becomes greatly altered by new generations.

M. Forel made a patient study of the famous amazon ants, which are unable to construct, or to rear the larvæ, or even to eat alone. Their chief work is fighting; they carry off the pupæ of working ants in other hills, but afterwards tend these with much care. Many new details are furnished by M. Forel regarding them. The amazon ant (*Formica rufescens*) is of a pale red, and about six or seven millimetres in length; the female is a little larger. The neuter individual—it can hardly be called a worker—carries five curved and branched mandibles with drawn-out points. Such an instrument cannot be used to cut wood or temper earth; it is simply a weapon. The amazons, thus equipped, fight quite differently from other ants. Unable to seize their adversaries with the legs and cut off the head or limbs, they attack the body, or transpire the head with a mandible point. They shew great agility and impetuosity in their movements, and a courage bordering on rashness. Never seeking safety in flight, the individual will rush on a strong ant-hill and kill several of the offenders, till he is overpowered by force of numbers. It is only in desperate cases, however, that amazons shew such rashness; when on expeditions, they march in close ranks, retire if serious danger threatens them, and make detours to avoid obstacles. The individual that may have got separated by accident on the way, hastens to rejoin the main body, and he will craftily avoid a too numerous enemy. When the journey is long, the amazons make halts, perhaps for the sake of stragglers, perhaps, also, from hesitation as to the direction to be taken. The force of expeditionary columns is very variable; sometimes not more than a few hundred individuals, often from a thousand to two thousand. The departures on these enterprises take place always in the afternoon; about two o'clock, if the temperature is not excessive; but later, if it is a very hot day. The preparations are speedy. Some ants are seen walking about on the dome in an indifferent way; suddenly a few individuals go inside; the signal is given; the amazons stream forth; they touch each other with the antennæ, and then the entire company sets off. The slave ants of the colony remain aloof from this movement, and do not appear to give it any attention.

Sometimes the amazons go at their object with surprising certainty; for example, if they wish to attack a nest placed on ground which they have been in the habit of frequenting. On the other hand, they easily make mistakes when they have to operate on unknown ground; at times their expeditions are unsuccessful. One day, about 4 p.m., a compact body of amazon ants was observed issuing from their abode (built by the brown ants, their slaves) on a sloping meadow. This troop descends the slope, reaches a vineyard, goes along the border of it a little way, then suddenly stops. The amazons distribute themselves in various directions; then, having come together again, they decide to continue their march forwards. After

going a little further, signs of hesitation are manifested; the company again stops, and scatters itself, one detachment in one direction, another in another; but the search is unavailing. One by one the detachments rejoin the centre of the army; then the entire column takes its journey homewards, as light as at starting. In the return, when it reaches the slope and begins to ascend, signs of fatigue are apparent, and the march is laborious. Individuals at the head of the column come back, as if to make sure that none has fallen out. At length, about 7 p.m., the amazons are once more housed. Another time, the band sets out at too late an hour. Tufted herbs embarrassing the path allow of but very slow progress; the troop changes its mind, and without apparent hesitation, returns to the nest.

It is rare, however, that the amazons allow themselves to be permanently checked by reverses. M. Forel tells us of one case in which a troop came to a field of wheat, and after exploring a part of it without success, the foragers had to return home. Next day, they set out in the same direction, entered the field, and traversed the whole of it, keeping to the right. In coming out, they found themselves confronted by a large nest of brown ants. To invade this by an open gallery was the work of a moment; and they soon came forth again, each amazon with a pupa. The last of them were chased by the brown ants. The robbers resumed their journey homewards; but instead of entering their habitation, they deposited the pupæ in a heap near the entrance, and came back to continue the pillage. The first of the column met those of the rear, and it was curious to see with what care they avoided passing too near, lest they might disturb them in carrying their burdens. The brown ants that had been robbed had, foreseeing a second assault, blocked the openings of the nest with grains of earth—a sorry resource. The amazons at the head of the troop waited till the whole body had come up; then they all rushed upon the hill, broke down the barriers, hustled the defenders aside, and loaded themselves with fresh booty. In these expeditions, the amazons will sometimes carry off empty shells, carcases, and other useless objects, by mistake.

No colony of amazons is complete without a certain number of slaves; and though for the most part these consist of the brown ant, the red-beard ant (*Formica rufibarbis*) is as willingly taken. The latter generally defend themselves with the greater energy, but are also always overcome. One afternoon, an immense horde of amazons was marching with great assurance in the direction of a large ant-hill. Coming in sight of it, it suddenly stopped, and emissaries rushed along the sides and the rear of the troop, to form the members into a compact mass. The red-beard ants perceived the enemy, and in a few seconds their dome, pierced with several large holes, was covered with a host of defenders. The amazons, nothing intimidated, fell on the nest; the mêlée was indescribable, but, after a stiff fight, the amazons managed to effect their entrance. Just then, a multitude of the red-beard ants were observed coming out with hundreds of larvæ and pupæ which they wished to save. The besiegers, however, on emerging again, were not without cocoons in their mandibles; and having satisfied themselves, they united in a body, and set off for their habitation. The red-beard

ants, now seeing them retire, followed in pursuit. The scene was most curious. One amazon, seized by the legs, would be forced to let go his booty; another, vigorously assaulted, would drop the cocoon he was carrying, to stab the individual who sought to take it. For a long time, the red-bearded ants thus harassed the amazons; but the latter, more agile, quickened their pace, and reached their nest with considerable spoil.

It would seem as though nothing could discourage the intrepid amazons. One day, in frightful weather, a column was observed on the march. Passing near a fountain, the unfortunate creatures were inundated; but the greater number managed, with much toil, to struggle over the wet grass. Coming to the side of a road, they did not hesitate to cross, notwithstanding the boisterous wind that was blowing. A little farther on, they succeeded in pillaging an ant-hill. Returning laden, they struggled along painfully amid the violence of the storm, and were sometimes even swept some distance away. Still, they were never seen to let go their burdens; and, persevering with indomitable energy, they nearly all succeeded in reaching their destination with the fruits of their toil.

There is a singular kind of ant known as the erratic ant, or the *tapinome*. When menaced, it squirts from the abdomen a volatile liquid with a very pronounced odour, which suffocates the assailant or puts him to flight. The *tapinomes* change their (subterranean) abodes very frequently, and make the transference with surprising rapidity. They are not of a warlike humour, but defend themselves resolutely if attacked.

STORY OF OLD BOB.

HALF a century ago, or thereabouts, any one who, for the sake of a short cut, walked down a certain lane connecting the two leading thoroughfares of London, might, on looking sharply about him, have seen a neat little shop devoted to the sale of small-wares. In the window were attractively exhibited cards of needles and pins, shirt-buttons, black, white, and red tapes, and thread put up in divers forms for tailors and sempstresses. The little shop, which had hardly standing-room at the counter, was kept by a Mr Robert—So-and-so—his name being of no consequence. In early boyish days he had come through a variety of difficulties, had been cuffed and kicked, and half-starved by parents, got nothing more than a trifle of schooling, and had led a sort of dog-life as an errand-boy in a business concern a good way east of St Paul's.

It is curious to note that under all these disadvantages, Bob—for we may begin to call him so—had in him, by a kind of intuition, the mind of a great merchant, and what was of more importance, he had the sense to see that no greatness can be achieved in anything, in fact, no good done in the world, without sterling integrity, and it may be considerable suffering and patience. So much in a rough way he had learned by the annual recurrence of Lord Mayor's shows on the 9th of November. Of almost every successive Lord Mayor, the story was whispered about among

apprentices and shop-porters, that the great man rolling along as a civic deity, with a splendid gold chain round his ermined shoulders, had at one time, long ago, been just as poor as any boy in the City. And further, that it was only by dint of perseverance and ingenuity in his profession, that this worshipful personage had reached his present enviable dignity.

Bob had what is called a head upon his shoulders. He saw there was a knack in well-doing. The thing could not be done by frivolity, nor, for that matter, by any special patronage, but by a self-possessed and earnest consideration of circumstances. Very good this in the way of generalisation. But what was the particular line to be followed? That is always the trying question. It was a shrewd conception when Bob fell upon the idea of making a start in a humble way with small-wares. As a shop-lad, he had not failed to observe that there is a perpetual demand for needles and pins, thread, tapes, and so forth. 'I am determined to set on foot a trade of that kind,' said the lad to himself; 'and if I am not mistaken, I could attract a lot of customers.' So resolved, and with some savings from frugality in living, the whole amount being only about twenty pounds, Bob throws himself on the world, sets up business in the narrow lane we have been speaking about. It was a bit of a struggle, but hope was in the ascendant, and there was a pleasant excitement in laying plans to get a reputation for civility, assiduity, and cheapness. Anywhere, these attractions will secure a degree of success. In London, if they become known, they are a fortune.

A reputation for extraordinary cheapness, as is understood, was the chief reliance. We are not aware of the ordinary profits on small-wares, but imagine that they are not inconsiderable, and afford some scope for giving bargains. Bob soon let it be known that his needles, and thread, and tapes were of the best quality, and very much cheaper than anything of the kind in London. To drive rivalry to despair, he is said to have actually sold certain classes of articles below prime cost. That, no doubt, was a little hazardous. It was safe only on the principle of throwing out a sprat to catch a herring. If the herring is not to be caught, the sprat is a dead loss. All depends on the likelihood of a good catch. In the locality where Bob had commenced his angling operations, the bait fortunately took. The small shop, at first fondly cherished, was insufficient to accommodate the crowding of customers, and the ever-growing stock of needles, thread, tapes, stay-laces, and shirt-buttons. Then, after due cogitation, comes an enlargement of premises, and an expansion of domestic concerns. The once obscure dealer is recognised by the neighbourhood as at the head of a thriving establishment. If he had a mind, he could be a parochial dignitary, beginning with overseer, and afterwards rising to be churchwarden. His tastes, however, did not quite lie in that direction.

It might not at this medieval stage have been easy to summarise Bob's desires. He wished to advance in business, to widen his range of undertakings, and, if possible, to get beyond the sphere of needles, shirt-buttons, and such-like matters. It

was a perfectly honourable ambition. He had begun in a way suitable to his means, but blessed with success, there was no reason why he should not stretch out in any particular direction, as circumstances seemed to direct. One of the grand features of a career in London is that you are left to yourself, with a wide scope for independence. A great thing for any one who has brains in his skull to be able to do as he likes, instead of being discouraged or kept down by narrow-minded and irresponsible neighbours. In his career, Bob did not exclude the idea of being rich, but he did not care for money in a miserly sense. His aim was simply to make the best of his faculties, and leave the rest to Providence. The possession of wealth, he knew, immensely widened the opportunities of doing good, and with this knowledge he pushed on. Of course, according to all experience, there were rocks ahead, and how to steer clear of these dangers requires no small degree of tact. Looked upon as a likely man, Bob was invited to become a member of the 'Free and Easy,' an evening club at the *Goose and Gridiron*, in a neighbouring court. The attractions consisted in good speech-making and singing, with some betting and drinking. Very pleasant, but the kind invitation was politely declined. He did not mean to pick up tavern acquaintances, although some of them were exceedingly clever fellows, with immense powers of drollery.

A very different personage was Knaggs, a solicitor with whom he became acquainted through a few business transactions, and who occasionally stepped in to have a chat about local matters. Advanced in years, and with a large practice, Knaggs had much to say about property in the neighbourhood. Dropping one morning into Bob's enlarged premises in the lane, and taking him quietly into the back-room, he mentioned that there was a capital shop to let—something which, from its conspicuous position in a leading thoroughfare, and its old-established drapery business, small-wares included, was well worth looking after. 'There's a chance for you,' said Knaggs. 'I could snap it up for you, if you say the word.' The proposal was too tempting to be rejected. Bob removed from the lane, carrying with him his old connection; and we now see him set up, not very grandly, but in a highly promising situation, in the full tide of London traffic, and that almost means the traffic of the world.

We skip over an interval of time. Forty-three years pass, during which there has been a mighty revolution as concerns Bob and his affairs. His establishment, for general retail alone, with some wholesale trade, is among the largest of its class in London. Floor above floor, and extended along the street, it is an organisation of gigantic proportions. What a row of plate-glass windows, shewing off piles of silks and satins, Indian shawls, printed goods, cambrics, lace, furs, carpets, made-up articles of female attire, and other things which we are at a loss to name. The shop, to call it so, is in itself a kind of town, or perhaps, more correctly, a huge mart of commerce. On looking in, you observe a series of counters fading far away in the distance, crowded with piles of drapery, and attended by quite an army of 'assistants,' who are ministering to hosts of customers. Intermediately, we notice a number of gentlemanly looking persons wearing white neck-cloths, who, as a sort

of adjutants to the corps, walk about to maintain discipline and to graciously hand on inquirers to the respective departments. At a side-door round the corner, you possibly observe laden wagons with goods from the 'manufacturing districts,' and also vans driving off with parcels of articles for town distribution.

Time has not wrought such marvels without leaving its mark on the originator of the establishment. He has passed through various phases in personal aspect and mode of living. Older and grayer he has undoubtedly grown in appearance, but his intellect, sharpened by exercise, is as fresh as ever. An enlargement of means has enabled him to help on beneficent undertakings. Churches and charities have partaken of his bounty. From the first, he was a warm supporter of Ragged Schools. In City affairs, when any great work is in hand, his counsels are listened to with respect. He is a fair specimen of the men to whom, generation after generation, London owes its greatness—men, we should say, of a generous nature, whose names are hardly known beyond the sound of Bow Bells. In conducting their enterprises, they every morning determine on transactions involving the risk of thousands of pounds. Their business communications are with all the ends of the earth. The post-letters they receive daily, and which are dismissed one after the other with inconceivable promptitude, would drive a country gentleman out of his senses. To the avalanche of letters by post, have latterly been added telegraphic messages, by which communications of a business nature are flying about all day long. Through the agency of those slender wires which cross the sky-line, negotiations of vast magnitude are effected in a few instants of time. With such facilities, people get through as much work in a day as their ancestors did in a month. Is not that method of cramming much into a small space, very much like a lengthening of the ordinary span of existence?

Going back to Bob's stupendous establishment, we are invited to notice what can be done by telegraphy. Directing your eye upwards to a corner of the building, you will perceive that it is furnished with telegraphic wires, to bring it into connection with some distant locality. As usual, the wires cross the murky atmosphere, and no casual street passenger thinks anything about them. They are, however, important adjuncts of the business carried on within, and affairs could not well be conducted without them. These wires are a means of communication to and fro between the acting manager on the premises and the proprietor, who now, with slightly failing health, lives in retirement some ten miles distant from town. Through the active agency of these wonderful wires, Old Bob, as he is now designated, knows as well what is going on at headquarters, as if he were sitting in a back-room with a peep-hole looking into his business establishment. So long as without inconvenience he was able to move freely about, he drove into town daily; but this recreation being now impracticable, an energetic system of telegraphic communication is substituted, and proves an unspeakable comfort. Like a commander-in-chief operating by signals, he, though miles away in the country, receives despatches, issues orders, and keeps himself acquainted with all that is going on.

Just let us take a glance at how things are

managed. The aged gentleman, true to business instincts, begins the transactions of the day at ten o'clock. That is to say, he walks into a pleasant parlour overlooking a well-shaven lawn, and seats himself in an arm-chair at a writing-table. In an adjoining closet, a youth is already engaged in front of a telegraphic apparatus, which, with sounds of click, click, click, he is assiduously watching; and ever and anon he writes down what is communicated, handing in notes to the room without a moment's delay. The intelligence is of a multifarious character, usually beginning with a report concerning letters that have been received. By way of illustration: Note of invoice of goods arrived from Manchester and Bradford; letters specifying what the whole of a bankrupt stock is offered for as a bargain for cash; letters from Lyons regarding French silks, from St Etienne about ribbons, and from Brussels about lace and window-curtains; letters from the midlands and the north about carpets; letters from Birmingham about pins, from Sheffield about needles; and letters from a well-known house in the Rue de Bondy about Parisian knick-knacks. How the old man revels in the multiplicity of intelligence. In spirit, he grows young again. Accustomed to make up his mind on the instant, he dashes off replies on the different matters brought before him; the whole affair, perhaps, involving purchases that would frighten ordinary mortals to think of.

Pretty well this for a beginning to a day's work. Leaving the youngster to attend to the machine, our venerable friend, weather permitting, takes a sauntering sort of stroll out of doors; or if that be unsuitable, he wanders into the green-house, a charming resort, with a splendid display of native and exotic flowering-plants, with a fernery at one end, and an aviary of beautiful singing-birds at the other. Here, there are rustic seats about, with a sprinkling of the morning newspapers, just brought in by the postman. While, perhaps, scanning the news of the day, the coachman peeps in to know if there is to be a drive out for an airing before or after luncheon. That being settled, back to business. From twelve to two, the click, click, click is going merrily. What delightful messages are coming briskly along the wires. 'Shop greatly thronged with ladies. At counter number three, sale of lace-flounce to Lady B, a hundred and twenty-three pounds. In the carpet-room up-stairs, five parties looking at Brussels and Turkeys. Just sold a job-lot to a country dealer, two hundred pounds. Much demand for white kids, opera-season being to commence to-morrow. Two young ladies trying on silk cloaks; preference for the black drap de Lyon, with bugles. A good deal doing in Irish poplins. Old lady in the fur-room buying one of the fine seal-skin jackets, thirty guineas. Marriage-party at counter number six, examining linens; they have fixed on six dozens of Ballymena table-napkins, royal pattern. Sales till this hour, 1.30, twelve hundred and ninety-eight pounds. Would have been more, but for shower at eleven o'clock. Sun now out, weather fine; crowding on the increase, nine carriages at the door, and three footmen with powdered hair in attendance, one of them in yellow plush, and white silk stockings. Throughout the day, several inquiries as to Parisian printed muslins, and numerous large

sales in these articles. . . . Six P.M. Winding up. Business done during the day, two thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine pounds six shillings and sevenpence.'

So, there, in the evening of his days, our venerable friend, who began life in a poor sort of way, and who has never slackened his endeavours in well-doing, is now enjoying himself with agreeable surroundings in the bosom of his family; at the same time, while drawing out existence in his pleasant country retreat, he has, thanks to telegraphy, the satisfaction of still amusing himself with his accustomed business duties. These duties, however, are not his whole reliance. Notwithstanding his miserable share of schooling, he has through life been a great reader, and has now a library as choice as it is extensive. Nor is he indifferent to those refining influences and pleasures which spring from a contemplation of works of art. To his house is attached a gallery abounding in choice and costly pictures, by eminent continental and native artists. That is not all. Fond of scientific investigation, he possesses a splendid microscope with sundry appliances, with which he pursues researches in natural history, that have made a respectable appearance in the Transactions of one of the learned Societies. Then, at times, he gives some attention to the public affairs of the immediate neighbourhood. The ancient parish church, which had gone to irretrievable decay, has been replaced by a handsome and commodious edifice, fully half the cost of which was, in a quiet way, voluntarily contributed by Old Bob—known in the country as the Squire at the Hall. That is but one of many things to which he has lent a hand. A Friendly Society in the village, which, through ignorance, had been started and carried on upon a wrong principle, and which was swiftly going to ruin, has been entirely recovered by his energetic management; according to last accounts, it was in an eminently flourishing condition. That is what we call being useful in one's day and generation.

Old Bob has been lucky in his family. His eldest son, educated at Cambridge, got into parliament last election—we will not say for what borough, nor what was his complexion in politics. Possessing not a little of his father's shrewdness, he will, we doubt not, make a fair figure in the House. The second son has for some years been in the business, to which also, we are glad to know, has been admitted a grandson of the late Mr Knaggs, whose friendly counsel on a particular occasion proved so advantageous. At present, there is a talk of the accomplished daughter of our friend being married to the eldest son and heir of a baronet in next county—the lady's good looks and figure being materially enhanced by certain attractive financial considerations—but this we give merely as a piece of country gossip, which needs confirmation.

Our sketch is finished. It depicts in outline the career of one of the Merchant Princes of London, whose persevering industry, breadth of feeling, and honourable discharge of duties in the general concerns of life, bear a favourable contrast not only to the disreputable speculators on the Stock Exchange, but to those who, subordinating their faculties to their vanities, pass through existence in little better than idle uselessness and mental vacuity. In a festively eulogistic strain, we,

as a last word, have the pleasure of proposing (with all the honours), a vote of general respect and admiration for OLD BOB, not forgetting to remark that he did a wise thing when he declined to be a member of the 'Free and Easy,' at the *Goose and Gridiron!*

w. c.

A CHINESE SPECULATION.

'It is a tempting offer, Mr Sin-lin-tai—very tempting!' said I, hesitating and puzzled.

'Then why you not say, Yes—one great big Yes—and let us shake hands upon the bargain?' returned the Chinese merchant promptly, but with an odd expression, as I fancied, in those long, sly, sloe-black eyes of his.

Now, the proposal in question was a tempting one, addressed to a poor fellow like myself, who had suddenly slipped down some rounds of Fortune's ladder. I, Frank Hepburn, bred to the sea, had lately been chief-officer of a noble clipper-ship, the *Swiftsure*, and with the certainty of becoming her captain in two voyages more. Our owners, fine old-fashioned specimens of the British merchant, had become insolvent through the failure of some bank, and their vessels had been sold for another trade. There was I, reduced to kick my heels on the quays of Shang-hai, waiting for an engagement, while my little venture, as part owner of the *Swiftsure*, was lost in the general ruin. What made matters worse was, that I was in love, and betrothed to pretty Lilian Travis, the niece of a worthy member of the British mercantile community established in that strange city that the magician Commerce has conjured up at the mouth of the great river, and that now our marriage seemed to be almost hopelessly deferred. I was thirty-two years of age, and had nothing left to me save my robust health and professional knowledge. Quite unexpectedly, Sin-lin-tai, with whom my acquaintance was of the slightest, had accosted me in his blandest manner, and had proposed that I should assume the command of a large and new steamer, the *Cassandra*, which belonged to himself and partner, and was bound on a coasting voyage to Canton and Singapore, with a valuable cargo and sundry passengers. The salary named was a liberal one, and the position, as I was assured, permanent.

It may seem unreasonable on my part, that I hung back, instead of closing eagerly with so advantageous a proposition; but then I had heard odd stories coupled with the names of my would-be employers. Ah-chang and Sin-lin-tai had, unless fame belied them, made their money through queer channels, and were deemed to be unscrupulous even beyond the average of their countrymen. Ah-chang was an enormously corpulent and silent old Chinaman, two of whose sons were mandarins; but the junior partner, who was fluent in the English tongue, was well known in Shang-hai as a pushing man of business, while both were reputed to be rich. I suppose that Sin (as we familiarly styled him in his absence) read my thoughts, for he lightly laid his claw-like fingernails on my sleeve, and said: 'Aha! Why, you say, Mr Hepburn, why Chinese give steamer to you? Just this—you got stout heart and cool head plenty much. Not do this' (imitating the action of drinking); 'and so save ship, if storm come or bad thieves come. Chinese trust you!'

I began to think it not improbable that such reputation as I had acquired for seamanship and steadiness might, after all, have been the real reason for the preference shewn to me.

A fine steamer was the *Cassandra*, glistening in all the freshness of her new paint and trim rigging, as, having acceded to her owner's offer, Sin-lin-tai took me out into the harbour to inspect the craft of which I was to be commander. Two lighters or rafts lay alongside of her, whence the pig-tailed stevedores were bustling, like so many laden ants, over her gangway. A fine ship, neat and taut, as though turned out of a bandbox, and by no means the sort of vessel likely to belong to Ah-chang and partner.

'Your chief-officer,' remarked Sin carelessly, when I had admired the mirrors and gilding of the best cabin, 'will be first-chop seaman. You know Bates?'

'Not the American? Not Brasidas Bates?' asked I, with a start. Sin nodded, but I looked and felt grave. That Mr Bates of Baltimore, known as 'Chinaman Bates' in Shang-hai parlance, on account of his taste for Chinese customs and associates, was a first-rate seaman, I could not deny. But he bore a dubious character; and had Sin and his fat partner made him their captain, with secret sailing orders to plunder and scuttle every defenceless junk he sighted, I should have been less surprised than at their selection of myself.

'Duckett,' Sin made haste to say, 'is second-officer. He your old shipmate.'

This was true, and a good sailor was Bill Duckett, when the brandy bottle was kept out of his reach, but I rather wondered that the cautious Chinese should have viewed his besetting weakness so indulgently. 'And our head engineer?' I inquired; 'and the third-mate? for three are needed for so big a steamer.'

Sin-lin-tai very handsomely left the appointment of these two functionaries to myself, and we parted on excellent terms.

Throughout the remainder of that day, and the greater part of the next, the question would keep recurring to my mind, as though some haunting demon had whispered it in my ear: Why did Ah-chang and Company seek me out to sail their steamer? Even dear Lilian's innocent joy, or her uncle's hearty congratulations, could not blind me to the fact that there must be something to account for the extraordinary appreciation of my nautical merits shewn by Sin and his partner. The sort of skippers whom Chinese shipowners like to engage are—well! perhaps are best defined as men of elastic conscience, ready to drop the honest trader at short notice, and to be smugglers, or worse, when crooked courses promise a high profit.

It so happened that my doubts were to be solved, and with a vengeance, for as I was making my way homewards, by a short cut, from the house of Mr Travis, I heard my own name mentioned, and mechanically came to a halt, close to a ruinous godown, or native warehouse, void of goods now, and through the rotten and breached bamboo walls of which I caught a glimpse of two persons in earnest conversation. One wore the flowing robe and satin boots which sufficiently denoted his nationality; the other was in European garb.

'We must cut his throat,' said the latter,

thoughtfully; 'for Frank Hepburn's clear grit, though I never liked the dog.'

'Must you indeed, Mr Bates?' thought I, for I had recognised my precious first-officer in the gentleman in black shore-going clothes; 'but, with your leave, there go two words to that bargain.'

'You do as you muchey like. You master!' answered Sin, with a cackling little laugh, for cruelty, to a Chinaman's fancy, always suggests itself in the light of a good joke. 'Perhaps more comfortable. No tales tell.'

'But,' said Bates, meditatively, 'it will be a tough job and a ticklish one. There are those forecastle fellows out of the *Windsor Castle* that you would clap on board.'

'Well, well, my dear Bates,' returned the Chinese coaxingly; 'would it do for them to say, Ah-chang and partnership no decent hand, only scum of grog-shop, and their own Lascar what you call? No wonder *Cassandra* no able make fight of it in the Narrows.'

'Ah, that's it. Hepburn will make a fight of it, and those *Windsor Castle* chaps will stand by him. Six brass guns, too, and a long rifled gun amidships! I tell you'—

'And I tell you,' interrupted the Chinaman, becoming excited; 'you flinch now, and Ah-chang say, Sin say: Bates turned coward, Bates no good; he not get ten thousand silver dollar, nor two, nor one. I say, steamer must be boarded, cargo must be taken, passenger pay ransom, or'—and he ended the sentence by passing his yellow hand, edgeways, across his throat. 'And as for guns, why— Sure some one there?'

For a bit of bamboo had cracked under my feet, and I thought it wisest to hurry away before my presence on the spot should be detected.

What was I to do? Nothing was clearer but that the foulest treachery was designed, and that life and property were alike in danger. The *Cassandra* had on board a valuable freight belonging to native merchants, who were to sail with us, along with other wealthy passengers, European and Chinese. From these latter a heavy ransom could probably, by threats or torture, be extorted; while the steamer was no doubt insured for her full value, and could probably be surreptitiously sold into the Japan or Indian trade, after her cargo had been unloaded, and the evidence of unwelcome witnesses summarily suppressed.

What was I to do? I might, by denouncing the plot to the admiral in command of the station, frustrate, or defer its execution, but that was all. It needs a strong case to procure any action on the part of the imperial authorities against a rich Chinaman, and I had but my bare word to set against the assertions of Bates and Sin. I might resign, but then, with a more compliant captain, the *Cassandra* would go to sea, and—

'Why, Hepburn, are you asleep or awake?' cried a genial voice, as I found myself confronted by an especial friend of mine, Commander or Captain Hamilton of H.M. gunboat *Wasp*, a dashing officer, and an excellent seaman, who had never forgotten, in the difference of our present rank, old schoolboy frolics shared in England. Well, I could not have wished for a safer confidant, and in a few minutes I had told him all. A long talk we had together, and when we separated,

Hamilton's parting words were: 'Leave it to me, Frank, to see you well through this.'

We sailed in fair weather, and with a smooth sea, and just wind enough to fill the white sails of the pleasure-boats that danced merrily around us. Lilian stood among the ladies on the quay, waving her handkerchief. I marvelled to myself what would have been her feelings had she known how soon the spotless deck of the *Cassandra* was likely to be reddened with blood. Ah-chang and his partner Sin were there too, to give us a parting blessing as we went out like sheep, as they fully intended, to the slaughter. But I kept my own counsel, and the rascally owners of the steamer saw in me nothing but a dupe.

There were, as I have said, sundry passengers, rich Chinese for the most part, with some Europeans, and a few ladies and children. The cabins were large and commodious, and we kept, as usual in that luxurious country, a capital table, at which mirth and merriment reigned. And all this while, as the champagne corks popped, and the piano tinkled, and gay groups chatted under the awning aft, Murder, stealthy and pitiless, lurked like a couchant tiger, ready to spring upon his prey. Bates was there, civil, silent, scrupulously attentive to his duty, but often to be seen conferring with a set of brawny, brass-complexioned mariners belonging to the Chinese portion of the crew, and whose countenances belied them sorely if they would not have been more at home on the deck of a pirate junk than on that of a respectable craft like ours. Of the European sailors, by far the most reliable were four or five stalwart A.B.s, lately discharged from the *Windsor Castle*, and in whose courage and steadiness I felt that I could trust.

From what I had overheard, I was perfectly well aware at what juncture of our voyage the peril awaited us. I knew the 'Narrows' to be the name of the most contracted part of the channel, lying between a long chain of islets and the mainland, a place notorious for outrages on the part of the numerous pirates whom the indolence or connivance of the Chinese government permits to infest the coast. Nothing was easier than for a force of determined men to lie hid among the many creeks that intersect the shore, and to assail an unprotected merchantman before their intention was conjectured.

The *Cassandra* was a swift vessel; and with a good head of steam on, and the cannon which she carried, I should have had little doubt of her power to repulse an attack, could I but have relied on my crew. With traitors on board, however, ready at a signal to assist the enemy, there could be no hope of a successful defence. The more I saw of the Chinese moiety of the crew, the less I liked their scarred, sallow faces, some of which bore the singular and undefinable expression that came of long sojourning in the Taiping camp, while all had the air of truculent marauders. Most of the Christian seamen were Portuguese—docile, swarthy creatures, but not over-warlike; while the English sailors, with the exception of the draft from the *Windsor Castle*, really were what Sin had described—the sweepings of the grog-shops on the wharf.

It needed all my self-control and command of features to maintain an unruffled aspect, join in general conversation, and avoid giving Bates, the traitor, the slightest inkling that I knew or

suspected anything. He, on his part, was discretion itself. I could tell, by various signs, that he was annoyed at my refusal to maintain a high rate of speed, so as to enter the Narrows during the hours of the darkness, which would probably have facilitated his projects; but on finding that I was firm, he accepted my decision with a tolerably good grace, and it was not until morning that we quitted the broader channel, and ran into the straits.

'How beautiful! How lovely! What sweet islands!' exclaimed the ladies who stood on the steamer's poop, admiring the effect of the rosy morning light as it played on the waving groves and dense vegetation of the many islands, of all sizes and shapes, between which and the coast we were now threading our way; and the children clapped their hands with delight as the red flamingoes and silver-plumaged ducks rose from the swamps on clanging wing. But the sight I most desired to behold was the open sea beyond, if, as was unlikely, we should be allowed to reach it in safety.

'Captain,' said the third-mate, Hardy, a brave and good lad, as he came hurrying towards me, 'there's a net—so the look-outs declare—right ahead of us, blocking the channel.'

I sprang into the shrouds, glass in hand, and one glance sufficed to confirm the youngster's words. Across the practicable seaway, from shoal to shoal, stretched a huge net, supported here and there by a line of stakes, and marked by a streak of foaming water. We were indeed in the toils, for I had heard often of this favourite device of the pirates. My best course was, clearly, to keep on. 'Run, Louis, to Mr Bradshaw, the engineer,' said I to a smart boy, the steward's lad, beside me; 'desire him to put the full head of steam on, and keep the *Cassandra* at her highest rate of speed. Off with you, and come back to report.'

The boy went, but did not return. The engines worked but slackly, and soon a hoarse, confused noise arose from below. 'Something wrong in the engine-room!' said I wonderingly. 'Mr Hardy, go below and inquire what is amiss.'

But the mate had scarcely begun to descend the ladder before he called out: 'Mutiny, sir, below. Some of these Chinese villains have'—

Then he was dragged down by unseen hands, and left the sentence unfinished; while almost instantly the screw ceased to revolve, and the steam came rushing up the waste-pipe, as the *Cassandra* floated idly down the current. A cry of surprise was uttered by the passengers, and was answered by another cry—the fierce, exulting yell of barbarians assured of an easy victory, as forth from the mangrove-fringed waters of a neighbouring creek there emerged three lorchas, their straw sails spread to catch the breeze, and their long sweeps lashing the water into froth, as the frantic rowers tugged at them; while, outstripping these, came on a score of boats, sampans, and canoes, full of wild and scantily clothed figures, who came on as fast as paddle and pole could urge their light skiffs, flourishing their weapons with every possible gesture of brutal menace.

I looked around for Bates. He was, as I expected, among the Chinese on the fore-deck, some of whom had overpowered the engineer and firemen, and stopped the engines, while the others were obviously preparing for a rush aft. Then I

threw a glance at the approaching pirates. 'If Hamilton is unable to keep his promise, Heaven help us,' said I, with a groan, as my eye ranged over land and water, without seeing aught but what was hostile. 'They shall not, anyhow, say that I failed to do my best.—Cast loose that gun,' I ordered, pointing to a brass cannonade; 'train it forward, and when I give the word, fire!'

The pick of my English crew obeyed, as sailors do obey when they respect their officer; and the advancing Chinamen, in whose hands now gleamed knives and swords, drew back as they were confronted by the threatening muzzle of the cannon.

'Chicken-hearts!' thundered Bates, who was a really bold villain, and he added some words in Chinese which revived their courage.—'You'd best give up, captain. It's no use. I spiked every gun of the lot with my own hands.'

'I know you did, you traitor!' shouted Duckett, the second-mate, suddenly emerging, armed to the teeth, from the cabin hatch; 'but Captain Hepburn and I were clever enough to set all right without your being the wiser. Ah! you thought me stupefied, did you, with the drugged liquor? You're mistaken, my hearty, for I pitched brandy and opium overboard together, and'—

Before the second-mate could complete his speech, Bates had drawn his revolver, and fired three shots, the first of which grazed Duckett's left temple, while the third wounded me slightly in the shoulder. Bang! in answer, went the brass gun, and the grape-shot swept the fore-deck as with the scythe of death, mowing down the mutineers like grass. But already the canoes and sampans were grappling with us, and the ladies' shrieks blended with the war-cries of the pirates, as wild forms came clambering over the *Cassandra's* bulwarks, and the Chinese crew, cowed for a moment, plucked up spirit enough to renew the attack.

What was that? Surely, I could not be mistaken. It must be—that is a ringing British cheer that reached me, in the midst of all that fiendish discord, and promised hope. A boat, yes, and another, came towards us as fast as the gallant rowers could urge them with their tough ashen oars. The boats of H.M.S. *Wasp*, no doubt, for here, from behind the friendly shelter of a mangrove-tufted creek, emerges the gun-boat herself, sending shot and shell with unerring aim into the enemy's midst; so that, before five minutes were spent, one of the lorchas had sunk, and another was on fire; while the savages in the canoes were only too thankful to beat a retreat as rapidly as possible shorewards. As soon as the gun-boat was seen, and the *Wasp's* blue-jackets came scrambling up the side, the rascally native confederates of the pirates flung down their arms, and with abject entreaties for mercy, fell upon their knees, and were put in irons to await their trial at Shang-hai.

Bates, the chief culprit, lay dead upon the deck, riddled with grape-shot from that very gun which he had confidently believed himself to have rendered harmless; but we had to deplore the loss of poor Hardy and of the head-engineer, both of whom had been cruelly put to death by the Chinese mutineers, on whom had devolved the task of stopping the engines as the steamer drew near to the net spread to intercept her passage. The pirates received on that day a severe lesson, for the *Wasp* kept up her fire until the third lorcha

also was destroyed, and the flames were rising from the huts of a village whither our late foes had fled.

'I've kept my word, Frank, as you see!' said Hamilton, as we shook hands, on the gun-boat's quarter-deck, after the straits had been swept clear of the pig-tailed enemy; 'but though, by means of native spies and a bright look-out, I managed to prepare my counter-ambush without yonder sea-thieves having a suspicion that a gun-boat lay hidden so close to that man-trap of theirs, I confess it was a near-run thing after all. The cunning of that Bates, or whatever his name was, in stopping the engines, was what I was unprepared for; and but for the bold face you put on it, old fellow, I should have only been in time to find the *Cassandra's* deck a shambles. To you, quite as much as to me, belongs the credit of this affair.'

So the mercantile community of Shang-hai and the naval officers of the squadron were good-natured enough to think, for, on the steamer's return to port, I found myself lionised and made much of by all, and more of a hero, I am sure, in Lillian's eyes than I deserved to be, for, after all, I had but done my plain duty. The gratitude of the merchants to whom the cargo belonged took a practical form, for not only was I presented with a handsome sum as salvage, but was appointed to command the *Dalhousie*, a fine barque in the China and Australian trade, of which I am still captain, while it is understood that on my return from my next voyage, Lillian is to become my wife.

As for the treacherous owners of the *Cassandra*, Messrs Ah-chang and Sin-lin-tsi, they at first assumed an expression of injured innocence, but were at last overborne by the evidence given by their accomplices; and finding Shang-hai too hot to hold them, decamped to some other province, having, as it was said, bribed the local mandarins to connive at their flight. As for the *Cassandra*, she was, I believe, confiscated to the use of the Chinese Viceroy, and sent up the river; but at all events I saw no more of her.

DEATHS AND DISASTERS ON THE STAGE.

In the excited and exciting lives of actors, dancers, and singers, so constantly before admiring audiences, the feelings, nerves, and muscles are sufficiently on the strain, without the addition of extraneous agitations. Considering the amount of sword-play and other dangerous 'situations,' incidental to the efficient acting and setting of plays, and especially of tragedies, the accidents that occur are wonderfully rare. Still there have been unintended effects, unrehearsed situations, which have brought the tragedy of real life upon the stage, under circumstances calculated to cast a gloom alike over actors and spectators.

Lives have been lost, or limbs shattered, by mere accident on the stage, mishaps of a purely mechanical kind, with which the mental exertions of the performer have had little or nothing to do. Ropes, trap-doors, spring-boards, planks, scaffolding, ladders, and so forth, are naturally the cause of disaster if not properly adjusted and used; and the stage can tell many a tale on this subject.

In the old days of Lincoln's Inn Theatre, when a pantomime on the fertile theme of Dr Faustus was being performed, some of the machinery gave way; one of the actors fell, burst a hole through the stage, and was killed; another was fatally wounded; and a third broke his thigh. Early in the present century, when Mademoiselle Aubrey was playing before the Empress Josephine at Paris, she fell from a glittering piece of stage-carpentry called a *gloire*, and broke her arm; while Mademoiselle Lebrun, a ballet-dancer, fell from a gold-bespangled chariot which was carrying her up to a splendid Mount Olympus, and broke her leg. In our own day, if a Blondin or a Leotard has escaped, imitators of those performers have met with many a disaster, some fatal in their result. On too many of these occasions, the accidents have been rendered all the more distressing by the victim being of a sex ill fitted for such exhibitions—women engaged in unwomanly athletics. More terrible still are the burnings which occasionally take place on the stage. Dancers, with wide-spreading skirts of gauze and muslin, are in much danger from the gas-lights placed near the side-scenes—witness the case of poor Clara Webster, who lost her life in this way while performing in the ballet of the *Revolt of the Harem*, at Drury Lane Theatre.

Some of the accidents are due to the performers themselves, rather than to the machinery or stage-appointments. Too much enthusiasm, or too little caution, may bring about stage-effect not at all wished for. The Roman actor Roscius, while performing the part of Atreus, was so unnecessarily energetic in wielding a sceptre, that he gave a brother-actor a blow that killed him. Another, when performing Ulysses, was accidentally killed by a too-ardent Ajax. In more modern times, when Baletti was performing Lelio in *Camille Magicienne*, he was shot in the thigh by a brother-actor, who took up by mistake a loaded blunderbuss—a kind of accident that has occurred more than once since. Farquhar, when acting Guyomar in Dryden's *Indian Emperor*, killed a brother-actor with an over-vigorous sword-cut. Mrs Bellamy, as an Asiatic heroine in *Tamerlane*, gave an unlucky poke in the eye with an unguarded foil to Lee, who was performing Axala, and nearly blinded him. The great French actor Baron, while performing Diégne in Corneille's *Cid*, wounded himself in the toe with the point of a sword; he would not permit amputation, as it might damage his acting and his personal appearance; and so the over-proud man died of gangrene in the hapless toe. Le Kain dislocated his foot while acting Briseis, and brought on a malady; this was so increased by his subsequent intensity while acting in Du Guesclin's *Vendôme*, that he died in consequence. Woodward the comedian jumped from a (stage) table when acting the part of Scrub, and sustained an injury from which he never recovered. When a German actress was performing in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, she fell heavily from the arms of

Avoardo (one of the characters in the play), and struck her head with considerable force against the stage; she died ten days afterwards.

Instances are on record in which performers enter with such fervour into the story of the play, or the portraying of an individual character, that their hearts or brains become affected in a way never intended. A performer of the character of Lusignan, in Voltaire's *Zaire*, allowed his feelings to run riot in the scene where Lusignan blesses his children; he became so forcible and impetuous that he fainted on the stage, and died soon afterwards. Over-excitement and exhaustion together, caused the death of a leading actor in the time of William and Mary; he was taken ill during the fourth representation of the long and fatiguing part of Cyaxeres, in *Cyrus the Great*, and died on the stage during the fifth. In the early half of the last century, there was a performer familiarly known as 'Fat Hulett'; he often overstrained his lungs, and doing this once too often, broke a blood-vessel, and died in consequence. The same fate befell the French actor Brécourt, while performing the rôle of Timon. In the time of Louis XIV., when Mademoiselle Champmeslé was acting in *Oreste et Pylade*, she was so exhausted on the fourth representation of a long and fatiguing part, that she was taken ill on the stage, and died from the malady which supervened.

Not immediately connected with the character represented at the time, but thinking more of the audience than of the drama, performers have in some instances been affected in a distressing way. To be killed with joy is not unknown in the profession. Angeleri, a Milanese actor, was so excited by the applause he met with on his first appearance at one of the Italian theatres, that he fell down at the side-scenes and expired. To be killed with mortified pride is also known in the annals of the stage. At Caen, about fourteen years ago, Madame Faugeras was suddenly called upon to enact a character, in Auber's *Diamants de la Couronne*, which had been allotted to another vocalist. She acquitted herself well under somewhat difficult circumstances, but a slight hiss was heard amid the applause; she suddenly fell down in a fainting-fit, and expired soon after being conveyed to her own residence.

Many cases are on record in which performers have been struck with paralysis or apoplexy on the stage. Molière, when acting in his celebrated comedy of the *Malade Imaginaire*, was seized on its fourth representation with a convulsive attack; he tried to conceal it with a laugh, and went on with the part, but sunk into the grave a few days afterwards. In this case he had been warned by his friends, and advised to desist from acting for a time; but he did not like to interrupt the run of a new piece which was likely to benefit the manager and the company. The actor Montfleury had an attack of apoplexy on the stage; so likewise had Mondory, when playing *Hérode* in the drama of *Mariamne*; he resumed the stage again, but before long broke down altogether.

During the time of George I., an actor named Spiller was struck with apoplexy on the stage of the Lincoln's Inn Theatre. About twenty years later, at the Norwich Theatre, Cashed the actor was similarly seized, while performing the part of Frankly in the *Suspicious Husband*, and died in a few hours. Near the close of the reign of George II., the celebrated Mrs Woffington, the kind-hearted 'Peg Woffington,' was one evening enacting the part of Rosalind in *As You Like It*; when she came to the Epilogue, she was suddenly rendered almost speechless by paralysis, and never fully recovered. Foote the comedian was a man who would have joked even under the gravest circumstances. Although struck with paralysis while acting in his own farce of the *Devil on Two Sticks*, he continued his habit of punning and practical joking during the few remaining months of his life. Being recommended to go to France for the improvement of his health, he stopped awhile at Dover, and went one day into the kitchen of the inn where he was sojourning, to 'chaff' the cook. He told her she must have been a great traveller, for he had heard that she had been all over Greece [grease]; she declared she had never been ten miles from Dover in her life. 'That must be a fib,' he returned, 'for you have often been seen at Spit-head.'

Later years have not been without their instances of sudden attacks of illness on the stage. Miss Linley, related to the Sheridans, was struck fatally at Bath while singing 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' in Handel's *Messiah*. When Baddeley was acting Moses in the *School for Scandal*, at Drury Lane Theatre, he was suddenly taken ill, and died soon afterwards. Mrs Pope, an actress of some eminence in her day, was seized with an apoplectic fit while playing Desdemona, and was lost to the world a week later. Lucca Fabres, a singer at the San Carlo Opera-house at Naples, broke a blood-vessel while attempting to reach a note above the compass of his voice. Two sterling comedians, Farren and Harley, whose acting is still fresh in the memory of men in middle life, were attacked with paralysis while on the stage. The former played afterwards, though symptoms of the affection were painfully visible; he was playing Old Parr when seized. Harley's attack came on while he was acting Bottom, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is said that his dying words, uttered unconsciously, were some of those which Shakspeare puts into the mouth of the redoubtable Bottom the Weaver—'I have an exposition of sleep come over me.' Somewhat similar was the case of Powell the actor, who, when on his death-bed, became suddenly animated, put himself as nearly as he could in the proper theatrical attitude, and gave utterance to the well-known line in *Macbeth*—'Is this a dagger that I see before me?'

The death of the elder Kean was peculiar in many ways. He virtually received his death-stroke on the stage, though he survived a little longer. His irregular mode of life had weakened his health, impaired his memory, and destroyed his elasticity of spirit; he had been troubled, too, by the determination of his son Charles to take to the stage as a profession, against the parental wish. The resolve, being fixed, the father agreed to give the son an introduction to the public, by playing *Othello* to his lago. The performance took place on the 25th of March 1833. The great actor was

tamer than usual. The audience waited for the bursts of energy with which they had so long been familiar; but waited in vain. The accounts do not exactly agree as to the precise passage which was destined to be the last uttered by him on the stage. We are inclined to think it was—

Oh, now for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind ;

saying which he broke down, became speechless, and was led off the stage. Mr Bartley solicited the indulgence of the audience for a few minutes ; but when it was found that the great actor could not reappear, Mr Warde took the character of Othello during the remaining scenes of the play. Virtually an old man at the age of forty-five, Kean lingered awhile, and finally sank. His funeral was attended by a larger number of theatrical celebrities than were, perhaps, ever before assembled at one time in one place. Though a man who had given way to intemperate habits, Kean had endeared a large circle of acquaintance to him. Among the pall-bearers and mourners were Braham, Macready, Farren, Cooper, Harley, Charles Kean, Sheridan Knowles, Bartley, Keeley, Wrench, O. Smith, Strickland, Webster, Fitzwilliam, Vining, Anderson, and Frank Matthews ; while the humbler members of eight different theatrical companies followed in the train.

The actual deaths upon the stage, without a moment's warning, are of course more sad to contemplate, and more impressive to those who witness them. Rather more than a century ago, at the Norwich Theatre, Peterson the actor was performing the part of the Duke in Shakspeare's *Measure for Measure*. He had to address Claudio in the words :

Reason thus with life ;
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep—

when he suddenly dropped into the arms of Moody, who was acting Claudio, and expired. These words, having so impressive a meaning at such a time, were afterwards engraved on his tombstone. John Palmer, an eminent tragedian towards the close of the last century, was engaged on what proved to be the last evening he was destined to live, in acting the character of the Stranger, in Kotzebue's drama of the same name. He had recently heard of the death of a favourite son—news which unnerved and agitated him. In the fourth act of the play, Baron Steinfort obtains an interview with the Stranger, recognises him as an old acquaintance, and asks the cause of his seclusion. The Stranger replies that he has left his children at a town hard by ; and then exclaims : 'O God, O God ! there is another and a better world.' Palmer, directly he had uttered these words, fell down dead at the feet of the actor who was performing the part of Baron Steinfort.

Two more instances of these unrehearsed, unforeseen tragic stage-effects. About sixty years ago, an actor named Cummins, in a drama in which he was performing, had to deliver a speech ending with the words :

Be witness for me, ye celestial hosts ;
Such mercy and such pardon as my soul
Accords to thee, and begs of Heaven to shew thee,
May such befall me at my latest hour.

Scarcely had the words fallen from his lips, when

he fell down dead upon the stage. Only a year or two ago, M. Victor, a comedian at a provincial theatre in France, fell down on the stage while performing a comic character, and expired almost instantly.

JACK FROST.

THE following useful hints respecting severe winter weather appear in the *Daily Telegraph*.

'English weather is so uncertain, that the extremes of heat and cold always take the mass of the people unawares and unprepared. In other countries, long spells of iron frost, to which our present experience is mild, are borne by the well-used inhabitants without harm. The Esquimaux grows fat in the long arctic nights which keep the mercury frozen ; the Chinaman takes his thick dresses out of pawn, and puts one on the top of the other, till he is a bale of wool. The Scandinavian and the Canadian poor have a hundred skilful methods of fighting the frost. In Kamtchatka, the fish-eating races occupy subterranean apartments in the winter, where they are as warm as rabbits ; and a Laplander or a Siberian never allows himself to suffer from cold, like the ill-informed poor Londoners, who shiver in unfit clothing and absurdly constructed houses, without understanding exactly why the winter kills them. In the all-important matter of food, for example, there is nothing more nutritious and warmth-giving than pea-soup and peas-pudding, yet, though the best split peas can be obtained at 60s. the quarter of 550 lbs.—that is, about nine pounds to the shilling—how many poor housewives buy this life-sustaining pulse ? If it seems not "genteel" enough for the pride which often goes—and usefully too—with poverty, there are lentils which can be bought for a very little more, and are yet the food of Eastern kings and queens ; and, as among the best flesh and heat givers known to man, are looked upon abroad, and not without reason, as far superior to the best wheat. Fish, again, is a description of food always cheap at this time, and most sustaining, and it must be remembered that the best fuel in winter is a well-filled stomach. As to clothes too, how many poor mothers recollect that they can get cotton wadding in sheets for a few pence, and that if they quilt this in between the lining and the cloth of their husband's and their children's garments, they have something as good as the costliest fur to keep JACK FROST away ! At night, it is no bad plan to put a blanket of brown paper under the counterpane. Once more, every one must remark that a favourite article of winter-clothing for children among the poor is a comforter swathed round the neck. This is a sumptuary error : the feet and wrists are the proper members to keep warm ; the nose and throat will harden into healthy indifference to cold ; but that muffler exchanged for an extra pair of thick socks and knitted gloves, would preserve a boy or girl really warm and well. Bronchitis and sore throat have declined fifty per cent. since the absurd use of high collars and twice-round neckerchiefs went out of fashion ; and if the poor would take better care of their children's feet, half the infantile mortality would disappear. It only costs twopence to put a piece of thick felt or cork into the bottom of a boot or shoe, and the difference is often between that and a doctor's bill, with, perhaps, the undertaker's besides.'

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

BEGINS a new year, and an opportunity occurs for making a few editorial observations. As the work commenced in February 1832, it is now almost forty-four years old. It is a long time for us to look back to the memorable day in the reign of William IV., when the first number made its appearance. Life was then young, with hope in full buoyancy, but hope not unmingled with anxiety respecting the success of our venture. It happened to be successful far beyond expectation, and after pulling at the oar for more than half a lifetime, we find the original current of approbation to be undiminished. That, we humbly submit, is something to be grateful for, and to be fairly proud of.

This continued popularity of CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL is the more surprising when we keep in mind the vast number of competitors which first and last have succumbed. *The Penny Magazine*, which began six weeks or so after the *Journal*, and which was ushered into existence under the highest titled and literary patronage, perished after a run of fourteen or fifteen years—a remarkable example of how little value is any mere factitious recommendation, or any flourish of great names, in the way of patronising. We, who had no special patronage at all, and did not want any, have outlived *The Penny* about thirty years. We might say the same thing of dozens of cheap periodicals, less or more formed on our model, or professedly with similar objects in view, and which might never have been in existence had we not pioneered the way. The failure of so many competitors, not a few of which, from their appearance, deserved to succeed, has always been to us a little perplexing. Their break-down was certainly not owing to anything we either said or did. From the first we held out the hand of fellowship to all whose aims seemed to resemble our own. Among our agreeable recollections are included a friendly intercourse with Charles Knight, and the cordial response of Leigh Hunt on tendering our good wishes for the success of his *London Journal*, which unfortunately happened to be very short-lived.

As a matter only of literary history it might be deserving of inquiry, why CHAMBERS still lives in perennial youth, when so many rivals have vanished and almost been forgotten. It is a broad question, and we would gladly leave its solution to others. A few things may be mentioned from our own point of view. The work has always been conducted with thorough earnestness of purpose, and in a spirit of independence. It has ever aimed at harmlessly entertaining and instructing apart from sectarianism, apart from political bias, apart from high-flown conventional theories. We have never cared about pleasing sects, parties, or individuals, nor of making literary capital by parading the names of aristocratic contributors. On all occasions, the work has been allowed to stand on its merits. What we have endeavoured to do has

been to meet the desires and feelings of the public; that is, all who, in a familiar and possibly amusing strain, could be addressed through a paper modest in pretensions, price, and appearance. That might be called our *raison d'être*, the charter of our existence; and as far as practicable, in the changing tastes and fashions of the time, it has been rigorously stuck to. Just as at the outset, we still address ourselves to large masses of every denomination, telling them what we believe to be the truth, and what may be useful for them to know, without any violent attack on, or a mean support of, prejudices.

Yet, the changing tastes and fashions of the time, just alluded to, have caused some difficulty. Forty-four years' teaching of the press, in which we rank only as an atom, along with numerous other appliances, have given a new aspect to the face of society. People do not now require to be addressed elementarily. The reading of books and newspapers is on a very different footing than it was in 1832, when paper and printing were subject to oppressive fiscal restrictions, that now seem ludicrous, indeed, hardly conceivable. With enlarged knowledge and the progress of wealth, have arisen tastes for what may be styled merely recreative literature. Dry information is set aside for what will afford entertainment. Beyond even this, there comes a change in fashion, expressed in the word 'sensationalism.' How to keep our ground in these progressive diversities, has needed some delicate management. Yielding to solicitations, we, for a time, to use a similitude, lightened the burden of our song; but the experiment never went with our feelings, and going back to the old and time-honoured notes, we shall be contented to let things take their chance. In a word, those giddy beings who want high-wrought sensational stories—which are nothing but the wildest rack of invention—must go elsewhere for them than to the pages of CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL. To one craving of the age we have been obliged to conform. We refer to a taste for continuous tales, extending through successive numbers. It is a novelty which would have been strenuously opposed at a time within our recollection, but to it there is nothing seriously objectionable, and we let it pass, only on all occasions taking care that the language and sentiments of the tales shall be kept within bounds.

It will be understood, therefore, that with such health and ability as we can muster, CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL will be conducted as nearly as possible on the plan originally projected, and of which the work for the past twelve months offers an example. The design is to offer a pure and wholesome literature—to cheer the invalid and the aged, to strengthen the good resolutions of the young, to stimulate and encourage habits of self-denial, industry, sobriety, and thrift, to point out what we consider to be social errors, to inculcate kindness to the lower animals, and to sympathise with and enlarge the higher sentiments of our nature. In conclusion, and as some guarantee for professions, the work is now entirely under our own guidance, assisted only by Mr R. CHAMBERS, son of the late Dr R. CHAMBERS, but with a further reliance on a large body of skilled contributors, to whom be all acknowledgments. W. C.

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